



Reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA) provides for the protection of submerged natural and cultural resources in the ocean and Great Lakes. Reauthorization of this important law is **five years overdue**, and changes are urgently needed to address existing needs and meet the growing challenges facing our nation's ocean and Great Lakes resources.

Why NMSA?

- 1) It is the only legislation that sets aside ocean and Great Lakes areas for permanent protection and long-term management as National Marine Sanctuaries; and
- 2) It provides NOAA with the Federal government's only comprehensive management authority for portions of the marine environment.

Necessary Improvements to NMSA

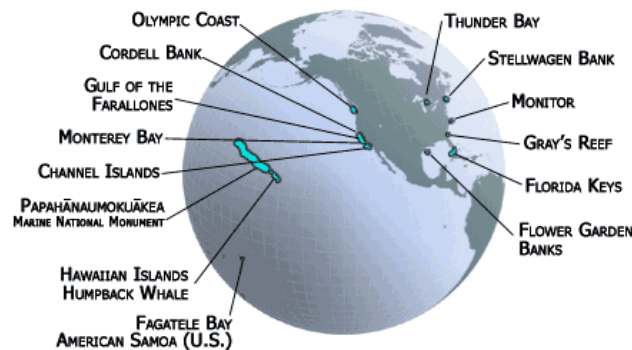
NMSA needs to be updated, strengthened and clarified to allow the Secretary of Commerce and NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to more effectively meet statutory mandates and more efficiently manage the National Marine Sanctuary System. NMSF supports the following changes to existing law.

- Strengthen ONMS' ability to fulfill its **primary objective of resource protection** while managing compatible uses within Sanctuary boundaries;
 - 1) Clarify this primary objective in the Purposes and Policies section and elsewhere;
 - 2) Allow managers to certify uses that are compatible with this primary objective and prohibit incompatible uses;
 - 3) Explicitly authorize temporally and spatially managed areas within Sanctuaries; and
 - 4) Allow greater permitting discretion.
- Allow the designation of new Sanctuaries and create clear standards for identifying and prioritizing places to be considered for designation;
- Provide an overarching mission statement and clarify ONMS' authority on local, regional, and national levels;
- Improve the efficiency of designating new Sanctuaries and amending designation documents;
- Improve ONMS' ability to manage Marine National Monuments;
- Address conflicts regarding fishing regulations within Sanctuary boundaries by managing to effectively protect Sanctuary resources on an ecosystem basis; and
- Increase the authorized appropriation levels to more adequately support the size and functions of the ONMS and the National Marine Sanctuary System.

Current Purposes and Objectives of NMSA

- Permanently protect nationally significant areas of the marine environment (and Great Lakes) by designating them as National Marine Sanctuaries;
- Manage Sanctuaries as ecosystems in order to maintain and enhance their natural biodiversity, historical and cultural heritage and other unique qualities;
- Promote, support and coordinate scientific research and monitoring in Sanctuaries;
- Facilitate public and private Sanctuary uses that are compatible with resource protection;
- Enhance public awareness, understanding and stewardship of the ocean and Great Lakes; and
- Support the indefinite endurance of Sanctuaries for the benefit of current and future generations.

The National Marine Sanctuary System



- There are currently 13 National Marine Sanctuaries nationwide (seven designated since 1990) in both nearshore and offshore areas, including one in the Great Lakes.
- Along with these Sanctuaries, ONMS co-manages the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, which was established in June 2006 and protects approximately 140,000 square miles of ocean as one of the largest marine protected areas in the world.
- Collectively, these 14 sites provide protection for sensitive marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs and kelp forests, habitat used by important or vulnerable marine species and historically significant shipwrecks and artifacts.
- Sanctuaries serve as living laboratories, classrooms and playgrounds for all Americans by making areas of the ocean/Great Lakes manageable and accessible for state and local partners, research centers, educators and other entities.